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By AT NARA Date 5-6-98

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OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

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Origin

ACTION: AMEMBASSY TUNIS

Info:

REF: State 052187

JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

③ 1. As you have been informed, principal theme of both Bourguibas during recent visit Washington was heightened danger in Mediterranean and threat this posed for Tunisian security. Bourguibas saw this danger as coming from dual source--Soviet expansion, and worrisome behavior of Soviet-supported states like Algeria. Bourguibas pointedly raised question of current validity Eisenhower Doctrine but did not press for reply and indeed seemed to recognize that present Congressional temper would not permit new security commitments.

2. Bourguiba Jr. in his talks with SecRogers and SecDef Laird did make two specific requests: one for US-Tunisian review of conclusions of Clowes Report in light of situation he felt had changed for worse; and other for US help in finding firm from US or other friendly NATO country to develop ship-repair facilities at Bizerte.

3. With regard to former Bourguiba Jr not very clear about what he had in mind, although he said at one point review should cover political as well as military factors. In call on SecDef Bourguiba Jr.

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AF/N:JEP Root:kmd 4/23/69

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DOD:

ISA/AF - Col. Kennedy (draft)

JS - Col. Bradburn (draft)

ISA/PPS - Dr. Lewis (draft)

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E.O. 12958, as amended
September 6, 2007

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did not cite specifics but gave clear indication he feels Tunisian forces only Qte symbolic Unqte and inadequate to check possible attack. Our impression is that he is less concerned with technical critique of Clowes report recommendations than with engaging new US administration in general dialogue on Mediterranean and North African security problems as they affect Tunisia. Probably Bourguibas themselves have not given great deal of thought to tangible results to emerge from such dialogue but are primarily interested in updated demonstration, visible to public opinion at home and abroad, that Tunisia can/xxxx on protection of powerful US. They may well hope that such demonstration would in part take tangible form of additional military aid, but perhaps of equal or greater importance in their minds are those political and psychological gestures by US which would bespeak continuity and reliability of US interest in Tunisian security and welfare. Bourguiba Jr stressed for example that project undertaken by American, Danish or Norwegian ship-repair firm at Bizerte for purely commercial purposes would nevertheless convey important political overtones.

4. From our point of view it is hard to see how review of Qte new danger Unqte mentioned by Bourguibas likely to lead to significant

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change in US effort, military or otherwise, for Tunisia. Tunisian army has not yet fully complied with recommendations of Clowes Report. We do not consider that potential Algerian threat to Tunisia has altered significantly over past two years. As Embassy aware USG has not insisted Tunisia adhere strictly to organizational concepts in Clowes report. Report still considered valid estimate of forces Tunisia could be expected to achieve without undue diversion of resources from economic development effort.

5. As for Soviet danger in Mediterranean, this is matter of general concern to US and its Western allies and is not sort of threat that lends itself to specific bilateral action with Tunisia. Indirectly but significantly, as Bourguibas well realize, Tunisia already benefits from presence Sixth Fleet and other Western defensive forces in Mediterranean.

6. At the same time we recognize ~~desirability~~ ^{importance} ~~desirability~~ ^{importance} attaches to our ~~desirability~~ ^{willingness} ~~desirability~~ ^{willingness} continuing interest and ~~desirability~~ ^{willingness} to maintain discussion.

Problem is to avoid having this lead us into dialogue which Tunisians would seek expenditures or commitments we simply not prepared to undertake.


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7. To be responsive to Bourguiba demarche in Washington while at same time discouraging Tunisians from spelling out more clearly intentions only vaguely hinted at in call for security review, we would like you now to speak with Foreign Minister along following lines:

a. You have been asked to respond to Foreign Minister's suggestion regarding possible review of Clowes Report.

b. As we understand it, Tunisian view is that worsening of threat in mid-Mediterranean during past two years may have outdated Clowes team's conclusions. Hypothetical threat dealt with in Clowes Report was that from Algerian armed forces. Our preliminary judgment is that potential Algerian military threat to Tunisia has not changed significantly and that Clowes recommendations for Tunisian forces as valid now as when report prepared. Tunisia has not yet applied number of these recommendations and deliveries of equipment from MAP just beginning. If FonMin suggests review Clowes Report, feel this could best be done at technical level with Embassy and USLOT.

c. As for general threat represented by expanded Soviet activity throughout Mediterranean, burden of concern, realistically

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speaking, rests with principal Western defense forces which in effect carry responsibility for containing Soviet threat. While we agree that Soviet expansion requires constant vigilance and that exchange of views between our two governments can be helpful, US considers Soviet forces in Mediterranean still not match for those of West and that latter fully capable of coping with all foreseeable contingencies.

d. Favorable reception Bourguibas received in Washington is which evidence of importance ~~which~~ new US administration attaches to continuing close US-Tunisian friendship and cooperation. We have taken careful note of concerns expressed by President and Foreign Minister and wish to continue to benefit from their counsel. Tunisia need have no doubt of our interest and desire to be helpful whenever we such and that which took place can. We are interested in/cooperation in security matters ~~(and)~~ Hammamet, during recent passage Soviet naval force through Gulf of ~~Hammamet~~ when we /closely coordinated intelligence estimates. This we intend to continue. We do not need to emphasize political, physical and financial limitations on our abilities, for we feel Tunisians have thoroughly realistic appraisal of factors entering into Washington

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policy consideration, but limitations must of course be kept in mind.

8. Naturally we hope to avoid new Tunisian requests and in discussion with Bourguiba Jr you should make clear your remarks in no way imply that Washington will be able to increase present MAP effort or go beyond previous expressions of concern for Tunisian security. Frankly, we would hope exchange of views itself would largely suffice to keep Tunisians content.


[ROGERS]

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